

## Student Rights

Students are provided certain rights by federal and state laws. California state laws cover the areas of enrollment contracts, advertisement, refunds, and instructional standards.

Prospective or enrolled students for educational or training services have other specific rights, including:

- ✦ The right to receive a catalog and enrollment agreement with accurate information about the institution and its programs;
- ✦ The right to the facts about job availability and salary ranges if the institution makes a claim to prospective students regarding the starting salaries of its graduates;
- ✦ The right to drop a course as appropriate;
- ✦ The right to receive a refund that meets minimum requirements set by the State of California, or in accordance with federal regulations, whichever is applicable;
- ✦ The right to be informed of the graduation and job placement rates for the institution if the institution you want to attend prepares students for a particular job or career; and
- ✦ The right to file complaints with state or federal agencies, and seek help in resolving problems with an institution.

## Approval and Accreditation

The Bureau gives the nearly 1,500 private postsecondary educational institutions in California the approval to operate. Approval means that the Bureau has determined and certified that the institution has met minimum standards as established in state law for integrity, financial stability, and educational quality. To qualify for approval, an institution must meet standards with regard to course objectives, and content of courses; physical space; equipment and instructional materials. Other approval criteria include the education, experience and qualifications of instructors and administrators; maintenance of student records; compliance with health and safety codes; and policies for refunding unused tuition and fees.

Approval is not the same as accreditation. In order for an institution to become accredited, they first must have state approval. If an institution wishes to go through a more rigorous process they can obtain accreditation through a private, non-governmental body. There are many types of accrediting bodies in existence. For more information, contact the U.S. Department of Education.

## For More Information

If you have any other questions or concerns about attending a private postsecondary educational institution in California, please visit our Web site at

[www.bppve.ca.gov](http://www.bppve.ca.gov)

or contact us at:

**1625 North Market Blvd., Suite S-202**  
**Sacramento, CA 95834**  
**Telephone: (916) 574-7720**

# Private Postsecondary Educational Opportunities in California

*The purpose of this brochure is to provide you with information that can assist you when making a decision concerning education at a private postsecondary school. Students attend private postsecondary institutions for a variety of reasons, including cost effectiveness, year-round flexible scheduling, job placement services, smaller classes, and individual attention.*

*On behalf of the Bureau, I wish you much success with your educational endeavors and encourage you to explore all available postsecondary educational opportunities.*

**BARBARA WARD**  
*Bureau Chief*

## What is Private Postsecondary Education?

Private postsecondary education provides adults an alternative to attending traditional community and four-year colleges. Private postsecondary institutions can offer both formal degree programs and vocational certificates for students looking for training in a particular field. Many vocational programs are designed to teach students the specific skills they need to be successful in a particular job. For example, cosmetology classes are designed to help students develop the skills needed to get a job in the beauty industry. Many degree schools cater to working adults. Oftentimes, these schools offer class schedules and program times that allow students to work full-time and take college classes at night.



**Department of Consumer Affairs**  
**Bureau for Private Postsecondary**  
**and Vocational Education**

*Barbara Ward, Chief*



50% recycled; 15% post-consumer

Rev. January 2006  
05-056 01/06

## Choosing a Career

Choosing a career is one of the most important decisions you will ever make. Libraries and the Internet are just some of the places where you can get information on career opportunities.

The library has a lot of information. For example, the Occupational Outlook Handbook, published by the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics, describes different occupations and lists the training requirements and future availability for them.

This publication and others are available on the Internet.

The Occupational Outlook Handbook can be found online at <http://www.bls.gov/oco/home.htm>. The California State Employment Development Department offers Occupational Outlook Reports for most California counties at <http://www.calmis.ca.gov/htmlfile/ccois/oor.htm> or by calling (916) 262-2162. In addition, the California Career Resources Network has a lot of information at <http://www.cacareerzone.org>.

## Selecting an Institution

Before you decide to spend hours of your time and thousands of dollars on one institution, do your homework. Find out which schools offer programs and classes in your field of interest.

Look at their catalogs or brochures; you can pick them up in person, view them on the Internet, or have them mailed to you.

Compare such things as program requirements, hours, costs, and locations and make a list of the pros and cons for each institution.

If you can, visit the institutions that interest you. Before you enroll, ask to attend class sessions so that you can listen to the instructors. Talk with students currently enrolled in classes and, if possible, recent graduates (see Job Placement). Although the cost of a particular program is a factor, your most important consideration should be the quality of education you will receive at the school.

Take a look at the buildings, equipment and location. If the classes you need to take require special equipment, find out whether the institution is using equipment that is current with what's being used in the field. Laboratory and shop work can be very important to successful job preparation and placement. Make sure that the institution you plan to attend has the equipment and facilities needed for hands-on education.

## Courses and Programs

California's private postsecondary educational institutions offer programs ranging from vocational skills certificate programs through graduate-level professional degree programs. Most institutions publish outlines that describe their courses. Find out which institutions offer the most up-to-date and well-rounded programs to fit your individual needs.

## Distance Learning

Many private postsecondary educational institutions offer distance education. Institutions are able to offer classes on CD-ROMs or DVDs, audio and video recordings, and the Internet through e-mail and Web-based delivery systems. Students find distance learning to be convenient because class times are flexible enough to fit their schedules. Not all students can be successful taking online classes—you need to be disciplined, self-motivated, and able to work independently.

Institutions that offer courses through distance learning correspondence or home study must conform to certain provisions set forth in state law.

## Tuition and Fees

Private postsecondary educational institutions are required to publish all information about costs for the course of instruction, such as tuition, books, room and board, materials, supplies, shop and studio fees, and any other fees that the student will incur upon enrollment. A list of charges that are non-refundable must be clearly identified. The U.S. Department of Education allows many schools to offer students different types of financial aid, including grants and loans. Some schools also offer training to veterans under the Montgomery G.I. Bill. The institution's financial aid officers have information about how and where to apply for scholarships, grants, and loans, including scholarships focused on students attending private postsecondary educational institutions.

## Enrollment Agreements

When you register and enroll for classes, you are asked to sign an enrollment agreement, which is a contract between you and the institution. Please take time to read everything carefully before you sign. Be aware of the non-refundable registration fee, cost of tuition, refund policy, job search or job placement services, and the specific educational or vocational skills the school promises you will achieve by enrolling in their classes or programs. Ask specific questions before signing. Be sure that all oral agreements pertaining to enrollment at the school and the school's total costs are included in the written enrollment agreement. (You should maintain a copy of this agreement for future reference.)

## Job Placement

Many institutions offer job placement services to their graduates; they keep records of new job opportunities and employment changes. Some institutions stay in touch with their students after they graduate. The best way to learn about an institution's job placement services is to talk to some of the graduates. You can request a list of recent graduates and companies that participate in the job placement service, and ask them questions about their experiences with the institution's programs.

## Instructors

Quality of instruction is a critical part of gaining knowledge and skills. Choosing good instructors can be just as important as picking an institution. Most institutions publish information in their brochures or catalogs about their instructors. Many instructors teach part-time while actively pursuing their careers, bringing first-hand experience into the classroom.

## Transferability

Private postsecondary educational institutions lead students to specific career or educational goals; however, if a student changes institutions, credits or diplomas are not always transferable. Before you enroll, check out the transferability of specific courses if you think you will transfer to another school before completing your program. Each institution is different; you will need to investigate the options for your specific situation.

## Student Tuition Recovery Fund

The Student Tuition Recovery Fund (STRF) was established to relieve and reduce potential economic losses suffered by a student as a result of attending an approved private postsecondary educational institution. To be eligible, a student must be a California resident attending an approved institution, must have pre-paid tuition directly and not through a third party, and suffered a loss as a result of a qualifying event, such as the school's closure. A student meeting these qualifications is entitled to file a claim for reimbursement of tuition.

## About the Bureau

The Bureau for Private Postsecondary and Vocational Education (Bureau) is a state regulatory agency within the California Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA), established in January 1998. The Bureau is responsible for approving and regulating private postsecondary and vocational institutes of education in California. The Bureau was established to foster and improve the educational programs and services of these institutions while protecting the citizens of the state from fraudulent or substandard operations (California Education Code §94705). In addition, the Bureau mediates complaints between students and institutions and investigates schools as necessary.